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If anything radically distinguishes the imagination of anti-imperialism, it is the primacy of the geographical. Edward Said

The island, that's all the earth I know. Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*

In his remarkable short story 'Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*', Jorge Louis Borges proposes that a forgotten French symbolist named Menard has rewritten Cervantes' *Don Quixote* word for word. Although it is 'verbally identical', Menard's *Quixote* is 'almost infinitely richer' because, for the early-twentieth-century reader, it appears as an audaciously ambiguous text – one that, like Borges's own experiments, is 'brazenly pragmatic' in its assertion that narrative creates reality.[1] Among the many implications of the story is that each age reads a text anew, and effectively creates a new author, not to correct the misreading of former ages, but because a text invariably and genuinely communicates differently to readers in different times and places.

For many twentieth century readers, Samuel Beckett's trilogy of novels *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*, completed in the late 1940s, represented a triumphant stripping away of context and setting in order to depict a fundamental and, one felt, universal human problem: the fruitless yet unyielding effort to know oneself through language, to comprehend objectively one's subjective existence. Were Borges's Menard to rewrite Beckett's trilogy today, word for word, and were we to approach these strange new books with fresh eyes, we might hail them for different reasons. Although their bleak contours would surely still suggest a 'tedious, and perhaps futile' condition, that we sense may be widely shared, many twenty-first-century readers would, I think, be more likely to notice the ground, 'the same place as always', upon which this plodding anti-quest takes place, and less likely to assume that this terrain is necessarily arbitrary and abstract.[2] Just as Cervantes' text revealed, for Borges, an unabashed postmodern critique of history-as-narrative, Beckett's novels, approached anew, would not suggest that our humanity transcends our location, but that it emerges in our inability to detach ourselves fully from the particularities of place. Rather than a depiction of ontological paradoxes that occur regardless of specific environment, they would offer profound meditations on the relationship between location and being, between where we are and whether we are.

In a global and transnational age characterized by the challenge to understand, at specific local levels, the relationship between identity, community, mobility, and territory, how differently indeed are we struck by the confused perambulations of Beckett's Molloy. Especially compelling is the way in which he plods across the 'obscure … country' of his 'end of the island', able to identify its distinct topography of 'tender pastures', bogs, 'undulating land', and 'deserted road[s]', but finding its cartography a puzzling business, unable 'to fix landmarks in his mind'(pp.9-11):

> Though I fail to see, never having left my region, what right I have to speak of its characteristics. No, I never escaped, and even the limits of my region were unknown to me…. For regions do not suddenly end, as far as I know, but gradually merge into one another…. I may well have left mine many times, thinking I was still within it. But I preferred to abide by my simple feeling and its voice that said, Molloy, your region is vast, you have never left it and you never shall. And wheresoever you wander, within its distant limits, things will always be the same, precisely…. And the cycle continues, joltingly, of flight and bivouac, in an Egypt without bounds, without infant, without mother (pp.65-6).

One could argue that Molloy's sense of location, characterized as it is by an uncanny conflation of exile and rootedness, travel and confinement, actually revises or parodies the ideal of world citizenship through the eyes of the perennially homeless – the person who, despite being attached to his or her 'native' land, has nonetheless always been disoriented within it, and is thus likely to experience separation from home not as an estrangement but as an extension, or broadening out, of an alienation that already exists. S.E. Gontarski, encapsulating a popular interpretation of setting in Beckett, once observed that Beckett's strategy in the trilogy was to strip away 'world[s] more familiar and recognizable' so as to move 'towards simplicity, toward the essential, toward the universal'.[3] The above passage suggests something more specific: that the 'universe' is not an abstract space into which the enlightened graduate as they critically emerge from their well-known regional context, but an unresolved extension of home, continuing obscurely beyond its borders. It speaks not to a post-statehood earth inhabited by exiles of 'familiar' ground, but a vast realm of deferred, yet-to-be-realized habitations – a boundless Egypt that remains everywhere under the influence of enslavement and colonial dominion as much as it remains everywhere spiritually undelivered.

In what follows, I hope to demonstrate that this hypothetical reading of Beckett – as a geographically alert and globally 'grounded' writer whose use of setting engages emergent discourses of cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitics more so than older ideals of universal humanism – is entirely valid.[4] To do so, I will need first to clarify how different – or how similar, but in subtle ways, how crucially different – this Beckett would be from the one we came to know during the latter half of the twentieth century. After all, many of the most influential twentieth-century interpretations of Beckett have claimed that his settings are abstract and meant to stand for physical or external reality *in toto*, while the more or less interchangeable narrators and protagonists stand for the human subject, trapped in consciousness, isolated from this terrain by thought itself. As Rubin Rabinovitz explains, Beckett's later fiction 'creates elaborate extended metaphors that suggest the enigmatic nature of the interaction between ideal and material reality.... Whereas Dante's metaphorical settings refer to a spiritual plane of existence, ... Beckett's refer to existence on a mental level'.[5] Indeed, for many twentieth-century readers, Beckett's stark backdrops either suggested, as James Knowlson and John Piling have so well demonstrated, the confines of the skull, the mind itself,[6] or signified the objective world that human subjectivity – the Cartesian *cogito* – is inherently separated from yet paradoxically drawn to comprehend. In either interpretation, a basic assumption is the inexorable disjuncture of objective reality and the (unverifiable) philosophical subject, the stark and featureless environment of the 'Cartesian separation ... from the world',[7] the most basic, and most geographically independent, of modern human conditions.

Key to this interpretive matrix is the argument that there is a progressive removal of specific place in Beckett's novels, from the social contexts of England and Ireland in *Murphy* and *Watt*, to the bare room of *The Unnamable*, and that this gradual abstraction of setting parallels Beckett's increasing effort to explore a condition that, although beset by deeply physical encounters, is territorially independent in every other conceivable way (i.e., not concerned with distinct national, local, cultural, or political contexts). As J.D. O'Hara puts it,

> as the Beckett hero regresses from the social context of the English and Irish novels *Murphy* and *Watt*, through [the French narratives of] Molloy, Moran, Malone and Mahood to the ... Unnamable, [we] move toward that possible impossible philosopher's man. The self at once expressed and potential, objective and subjective.[8]

The assumption that any geographic contours or contexts less general than 'the external or objective world' are irrelevant to Beckett is important, for it has often abetted another central notion about his work: its 'universal' appeal or transcultural humanistic significance. As Deirdre Bair puts it, Beckett's 'first-person monologue became stripped of the externalities of place, plot and time [so as to] make his life universal, to represent the lives of all men'.[9]

The notion that separation or estrangement, in its various forms, is not an anomaly but a *sine qua non* of modern humanity, and that progressive removal of identifiable and meaningful setting is its aesthetic corollary, has also drawn from and contributed to the idea of Beckett's work as the culmination of international modernism. When framed as an international movement, modernism's aesthetic innovations were, among other things, often interpreted as promoting a 'cosmopolitan' mindset, a compassionate statelessness all the more meaningful because it was being raised defiantly out of the fresh traumas of nationalism.[10] Given the operative opposition between 'national' and 'universal' in this approach, it is easy to see how Beckett's vitriolic comments about Ireland in his early work, his departure from Ireland for Paris (and of English for French), and European opinion of Ireland as culturally retrograde due to sectarianism and nationalism, contributed greatly to the idea of the universal reach, and intent, reflected in his minimalism. In many readings of Beckett, these three concepts – estrangement or alienation from the objective world, the compassionate cosmopolitanism or universality evoked by his bereft characters, and Beckett's eschewing of Ireland or Irish culture – form a dynamic, centripetal constellation. Ruby Cohn, one of the first to describe Beckett and Joyce as 'Irish Cosmopolitans', argued that identifiable Irish geographies gradually dissolve from Beckett's novels because their ultimate objective is to depict an ontological darkness that is at once the human cosmos. '[Even] in [his] Irish dominated novel [*Watt*]', writes Cohn, 'Beckett's cosmopolitan concerns may be read .... For [the novel] is about a quest for transcendence that is by definition supranational.... In successive works, Beckett strips away people, space, and time' until his characters exist in a darkness that 'is the cosmos'.[11]

Although the 'universal' Beckett has been complicated by historical and Irish studies approaches, this influential method of defining his global relevance, of determining or framing his undeniably extra-national meaning, still awaits revision. In their introduction to the recent *Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett*, for example, C.J. Ackerley and S.E. Gontarski note that when Ireland 'disappears' from Beckett's work it becomes 'an aura, ... a specter with its subject gone', a vague geographical contour that haunts an immaterial and purely

'psychological landscape'.[12] Although they insist that the 'intellectual landscape' of Beckett's modernism is distinct precisely because it is not connected to a 'physical' territory (which Ireland represents), they nonetheless align it effortlessly with the specific territory of Europe. A reductive distinction between visceral, national Irish culture and cerebral, un-territorial European culture facilitates the manoeuvre: 'Despite his Irish roots and recent attempts of countrymen to recolonize him, Beckett was a consummate European, more comfortable in the intellectual milieu of Europe than that of his native "prosodoturfy"'.[13]

Recent efforts to redefine cosmopolitanism from postcolonial and minority-transnational perspectives can help us erode this stubborn opposition between the physical, non-cerebral, colonial ground of Beckett's Ireland and the immaterial, psychological landscape of his European modernism. For most contributors to the postcolonial reassessment of cosmopolitanism, a key problem with the older, 'supranational' ideal is that its concept of universality is based upon, as Walter Mignolo puts it, a '*temporal* conceptualization of world history [at the expense of a] *spatial* conceptualization of world histories and relations'.[14] In other words, it locates the recognition of universal reality in the aftermath or estrangement from a historical and cultural milieu that was, at some earlier time, coherent or sufficient, but that has become *no longer* tenable. In so doing, it fails to consider what the 'beyond' of a national conscience might mean to those still forming such a conscience – those who reside in and travel beyond developing or colonized territories that are still in the process of achieving egalitarian, sovereign statehood.

The temporal and progressive contextualization of the nation/cosmos distinction is strengthened by the argument, in some critical discourses of modernism, that aesthetic gestures which advocate internalization, the contingency of social contexts and ideologies, or the synchronicity of human experiences reflect a decisive break not simply from the past, but from the past as embodied in a place, from history as 'known' territory. 'The hallmark of modernism', writes Astradur Eysteinsson, is 'a negation of prevalent traditions, a process of becoming critically aware of the ... writer's immediate background and environment, that is, the history out of which he or she emerges'.[15] Ricardo Quinones, in *Mapping Literary Modernism*, similarly maintains that

> The dominant experience at the modernist point of departure is one of ... a persistent will and a prevalent code all coming to an end ... of a suddenly revealed cosmic emptiness behind human

> experience, ... and even of the dissolution of the known, ordinary, solid world.[16]

Deeply implicit here is the idea of a simultaneously aesthetic and physical 'emergence' or 'departure' from a *known* environment: a divorce from an episteme which had, at one time, made sense of the world – which had, prior to the modern 'moment', explained one's existence as 'solid', accepted, 'ordinary'.[17] Indeed, the linkage between aftermath, or living at the end of history, and the poignant discovery of something universal in 'human experience' is nothing less than endemic in Beckett criticism. For Eric Levy, Beckett's later fiction suggests that

> The real Fall occurred not in Eden but in our century. After the accumulation of too much history, we have lost the innocence required to believe in any more explanations. The only certainties left are the falseness of all interpretive structures and the radical unintelligibility of human experience without them.[18]

Only after our separation from interpretive paradigms we *once* believed in, the argument goes, may we be initiated into a universally human community whose members share the experience of becoming similarly displaced, similarly cast out of some prior place of belonging that we once understood, or formerly objectified, via interpretive historical structures.

Theodor Adorno, whose readings of Beckett provide no end of valuable insights into the author's critique of modernity, also provides some of the best examples of this geographically and historically vague, but spatially and temporally absolute, interpretation of universality in Beckett's aesthetic. In response to Lukács's argument that Beckett's isolated subjects are decadent symptoms of capitalist alienation, Adorno, speaking of the trilogy in particular, makes the crucial point that 'solitude, taken to its logical conclusion, turns into its own negation' and thus 'reveals itself to be the hidden consciousness of all human beings'.[19] For Adorno, Beckett's ambiguous but physically concrete settings are the key to a negative poetics that objectifies our mutual alienation as modern subjects: 'the world's hour has struck, and it resounds in [the Beckett narrator's] monologues' (p.231).[20] But as these quotations already clarify, Adorno's spatial and temporal semantics are abstracted from Eurocentric, established nation-state historicity: the language, again, of an irrevocable separation from a formerly coherent world, of the need to disengage the subject from a manifest orthodoxy or 'solid' socio-economic context in order for that subject to perceive its universality or secular

mutuality. Beckett epitomizes, says Adorno, modernity's 'annihilat[ion] [of] the meaning that culture once was' (p.241), and in doing so shows us 'Ur-humans [that] are the last humans' (p.226).

Recent critical discourse on cosmopolitanism takes issue not so much with the idea that there can be such a thing as humanity in the abstract – or deconstructed selfhood as a geographically neutral phenomenon – as with the supposition that a genuine perception or experience of these phenomena must be the conceptual opposite of and the temporal successor to a previously internalized or 'achieved' national and cultural episteme. That is to say, it tends to refute the assumption that a national geography, history, and culture amount to a *prior* coherence or a 'given' modality,[21] and that a critical alienation, or anxious estrangement, from this pre-existing state is what places the subject on the threshold of transcendent, transnational being. In place of this model, many contributors would propose that our complex and sometimes multiple attachments to cultural, ethnic, or national communities, and our sensitivity to shared human conditions must be particularized, intervening, embodied processes, and that neither our local nor global belonging is abstract *or* limited to a fixed material domain. For scholars engaged in understanding the multiple attachments of diasporas, postcolonial subjects bereft of genuine state sovereignty, and emergent transnational communities, the term 'cosmopolitan' must signify 'not merely an abstract ideal', as Bruce Robbins puts it, '[but a] socially and geographically situated' or 'located and embodied' reality.[22] Although the term 'cosmopolitan' still vacillates between positive and pejorative connotation,[23] it increasingly denotes experiences in which world territory, although frequently or broadly traversed, is not a dim abstraction easily conflated with the universe, but an always physical or material, if cartographically and historically layered, ground. That is, it denotes experiences in which dislocation becomes relocation, in which mobility beyond cultural borders becomes movement between them, and in which departure from and attachment to national states (especially those interrupted, contested, and characterized by subaltern occlusion) are not incompatible, but dynamically and vitally interconnected phenomena.[24]

Although there is by no means a singular definition of what 'new' cosmopolitanism is, recent discussions and debates about global democratic futures often hinge on the point that oppositional models of nation and universe, or concrete national past and abstract global present, fail miserably to describe what it means to 'emerge from' a history defined by decolonization, neo-colonialism, partitioned states, and contested historiography and language. In such cases, 'home' or the homeland can be every bit as elusive as the human subject, thus an

extraction from its unsettled ground cannot be simply understood as a gesture of departure from the known into the unknown, the interpellated to the uncanny. It is more likely to be what Molloy experiences in the aforementioned passage: the mobilization, across new territories, of an already existing, interrelated ambiguity of the place and the self.

Indeed, to reflect on these challenges to older cosmopolitan models is to realize that there are far less oppositional and absolute ways of thinking about Beckett's transition from identifiable Irish settings in his early fiction to the vague or abstract settings of the trilogy. After all, much of the later Beckett is arguably not about life in the aftermath of something prior that has been lost or eroded, but about the experience of waiting for a coherence to arrive, to be realized, in the first place. Especially in *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*, there is no 'formerly known' place, no prior world that used to make sense; rather, dating to the earliest days any aging narrator can recall, there is only repetitive motion across, and cyclically renewed and frustrated efforts to set narratives within, a tangible, real and affective ground that has *never been* comprehensible: 'Are there other places set aside for us and this one where I am, with Malone, merely their narthex? ... No no, we have all been here forever, we shall all be here forever, I know it' (p.293). In these works, the disorientation that we undergo with the narrators does not arise in the aftermath of a ruptured episteme or temporal threshold; instead, it cyclically returns *while* we are 'on the point of vanishing' (p.195), 'on the threshold of being no more' (p.194), or 'on the brink of a better earth' (p.83). Transformations, such as they are, occur as we plod towards an end that is perpetually deferred: 'And on the threshold of being no more I succeed in being another' (p.194).

The trilogy chronicles the perpetual and failed effort to *achieve* orientation; more accurately, it depicts narrators whose knowledge of self is inseparable from comprehension of their specific local environment, and for whom such confluent knowledge is always *yet* to occur. In *Malone Dies*, when the primary narrator confronts the silence between the exhaustion of one of his stories, all of which are set in the seaside landscape surrounding his hospital room, and the beginning of another, he fixates on the problem of narrating his own local origins. But, as with his numerous stories about '[t]he peasants' (p.196) who reside in that locality, the challenge is that he cannot find a suitable point from which to begin. The point of origin that eludes him is not an abstract or purely ontological one; rather, as is often the case with reminiscence in Beckett, it is a potential but unrealized integration with a specific community and place:

> One day [my mother and I] were walking along the road, up a hill of extraordinary steepness, near home I imagine, my memory is full of steep hills, I get them confused.... I can still see the spot opposite Tyler's gate. A market gardener, he had only one eye and wore side whiskers.... You could see the sea, the islands, the headlands, the isthmuses, the coast stretching away to north and south and the crooked moles of the harbor (p.268).

While these memories suggest vivid, almost tactile connections to a particular landscape and its inhabitants, they also suggest that the inability to internalize an externally manifest correlation between self, others, and shared land is as old as the memories. In his recently published letters, Beckett notes that walking in the 'calm secret hostility' of the south Dublin hills was an intensely nostalgic experience,[25] and implies that one of the memories it evoked was his frustrated childhood wish to feel integrated with his family and local community. After a customary walk 'from Rathfarnham to Enniskerry' in August 1931, he wrote to Thomas McGreevy that he could not 'compose poems walking', like Rimbaud, because 'for me, walking ... is a carrefour of memories, memories of childhood mostly, moulin à larmes'.[26] As in the *Malone Dies* passage, the problem of linking place and self is not, here, a new condition suffered in the wake of a prior, and now lost, sense of belonging, but an *original*, historically extensive condition. All subsequent narratives are a repetition of this initial, irreconcilable aporia: 'There I am back at my old aporetics' (p.181). '[A]ll things considered I would be hard set to say for certain where exactly they are, in relation to where exactly I am' (p.219).

'[T]o go on means going from here' (p.302), as the narrator of *The Unnamable* ultimately summarizes the problem, but like Molloy, 'he [does] not know quite where he [is], except that he [is] in a plain, and the mountains not far, nor the sea' (p.240); therefore, although attachment to place remains and although that place, including its inhabitants, is continually and physically present, the Beckett narrator is always 'start[ing] again from nowhere', admitting 'a certain confusion in the exordia ... no matter who I am, no matter where I am' (p.302). In other words, if there is a connection between a basic human perplexity and a sense of detachment from a manifest environment or 'historical background', it stems from a form of alienation that is quite different from the one presupposed by the older cosmopolitan model. Beckett's narrators claim never to have left 'here' – 'having always been here, I am here still' (p.302) – yet they have *always* been estranged from 'here', or have been 'here' and 'there' simultaneously, because here is, and always has been, a place one cannot speak of with certainty. Ironically, then, the relentless 'here' of the trilogy is a 'confused plain'

(p.286) that defies the kind of absolute spatial and temporal pronouncements which are necessary for constructing the metanarratives of modernity, loss, or estrangement that we are compelled to employ in our understanding of Beckett.

Just as the passages I have cited above exemplify the trilogy's implicit critique of historical or geographic aftermath, they also introduce a second, deeply related, feature of the work that demands analysis in a contemporary cosmopolitan context: its use of local Irish settings. Although it is rarely considered relevant to serious philosophical understanding of the novels, the trilogy evokes not just a vaguely Irish countryside, but the suburban landscapes along the Kingstown and Dalkey line (including Foxrock, Coliemore Harbor, Dun Laoghaire and its imperial port and docks, Glencullen Road, Sandymount). This is, of course, the Ireland of Beckett's youth and his return visits, the site of his crucial revelation that ambiguous minimalism and 'lack of knowledge' would be his guiding aesthetic principles,[27] the setting of *Watt* and *All That Fall*, and the ground for memories, but possibly also the present, in works with otherwise obscure settings such as *Waiting for Godot* and *Krapp's Last Tape*.[28]

It is also a local context profoundly conducive to the notion that disorientation and estrangement can be consubstantial with rootedness or provinciality, and an excellent example of why the 'national' pasts of decolonization cannot be reduced to a known ground, or historical 'background', that in turn becomes the opposite of a 'universal' reality. Although Beckett treats it much more ambiguously than James Joyce, this is the same coastline upon which *Ulysses* opens: replete with Martello towers, exclusive communities, the imperial port of Kingstown, and other landmarks representing the long and drastically uneven history of British colonization; it is for Joyce an appropriate backdrop against which to develop themes of usurpation and failed internationalism. As Beckett also knew well, it is a region which testifies to the fact that Ireland between the death of Parnell and the republic of De Valera is, as David Lloyd puts it, too characterized by 'the episodes and fragments of a history still in progress' to be thought of in any historically comprehensive, much less apocalyptic, fashion.[29] A similar claim may be made about how the region indicates Ireland spatially, given that it represents not only the partition of the island, but also the numerous economic, social, and political enclaves within its two primary subdivisions. To be sure, it embodies the 'dislocating intersections between local and global processes' which produced the 'uneven development of the island'.[30] For Beckett, 'Ireland' at a local level was defined by these incongruities, comprised as it was of

movement between different kinds of Protestant enclaves (Foxrock, 1906-1919; Portora Royal School in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, 1920-1923; Trinity College, Dublin, 1923-1927 and 1930) during the intense escalation of republicanism, decolonization, and civil war. The relatively sequestered life of these enclaves offered their own silent testament to the disunited, irreducible territory within which they were situated, and ample opportunity to observe the great distances that ideological partition creates, or augments, between individuals and communities, and between communities themselves.

This disjuncture was especially evident during the Easter Rising and subsequent Anglo-Irish War, for in the insular, upper middle-class suburbs along the Kingstown and Dalkey line, the response to the conflicts around their perimeter tended towards 'a nervous silence and ... withdrawal', wherein the '[o]utrage would be condemned and events commented on behind closed doors, but often not even in front of one's servants'.[31] Along with seeing political and class conflicts repeatedly met with anxious silence, Beckett was haunted by memories of watching the fires in Dublin following the Easter Rising from atop one of the many high hills in the region ('near home I imagine, my memory is full of steep hills' (p.268)),[32] where his father had taken him to join other local residents who watched the proceedings with 'a certain amount of jocularity'.[33] What must have made these juxtaposed scenes so unforgettably troubling to Beckett, at least in part, was the way in which they demonstrated the immense disparity between a visceral event and the language available for speaking of it, an act of outrage and a conceptual map on which to locate it. The region also contained poor and working class neighborhoods whose inhabitants crossed community borders for employment, and was traversed, like so much of Ireland, by impoverished itinerants. Thus to the sentient observer, it embodied a broader reality of alienation, not only of individuals, religions, and classes from one another, but also of daily experience from any politically professed rubric of national integration or cultural solidarity, whether it be of a unionist or republican mold.[34] In *Malone Dies*, the narrator tries to compose stories about the 'labours of the peasants' that reflect 'the inadequacy of the exchanges between rural and urban areas' (pp.194-96). The exhaustion of narrative which results, although it could be experienced or applied elsewhere, thus retains, and requires for its full understanding, a unique local significance: 'In his country, the problem – no, I can't do it. The peasants. His visits to. No, I can't. Assembled in the farmyard they watched him depart, on stumbling, wavering feet, as though they scarcely felt the ground' (p.196).[35]

In Beckett's radio play *All That Fall*, written five years after *Molloy*

was published and less ambiguously set in and around Foxrock, a speech by Mrs. Rooney strongly implies that the effort to integrate self, region, and nation from a hilltop vantage point in this area results in a crisis of orientation that is, at the same time, a crisis of subjectivity:

> Now we are the laughing stock of the twenty-six counties. Or is it thirty six? ...
>
> The entire scene, the hills, the plain, the racecourse with its miles and miles of white rails and three red stands, the pretty little wayside station, even you yourselves, yes, I mean it, and over all the clouding blue, I see it all, I stand here and see it all with eyes ... through eyes ... oh if you had my eyes ... you would understand ... the things they have seen.[36] (first ellipses mine)

As with the narrator's confused recollections and failed narratives of the region in *Malone Dies*, these lines merge the frustrated desire to connect with the people who inhabit one's visible region with the problem of self-comprehension. (In Mrs. Rooney's claim that if her companions could have her eyes they might 'understand ... the things they have seen', the pronoun 'they' could refer to her eyes or to the inhabitants whose lives she is trying to discern as she gazes across the horizon.)

Importantly, some of the trilogy's most profound reflections on the contingencies and paradoxes of narrative as a means of self-knowledge (i.e., as a means of locating the philosophical subject) are consubstantial with the narrator's effort to orient himself within a divided community. In *Malone Dies*, several passages suggest, as much as any in Beckett, that this would-be community, this insistently material but unclassifiable landscape, is the local region of the author's youth:

> When I stop, as just now, the noises begin again, strangely loud, those whose turn it is. So that I seem to have again the hearing of my boyhood.... There was nothing, not even the sand on the paths, that did not utter its cry.... The sound I liked best had nothing noble about it. It was the barking of dogs, at night, in the clusters of hovels up in the hills, where the stone cutters lived, like generations of stone-cutters before them.... From the hills another joy came down, I mean the brief scattered lights that sprang up on their slopes at nightfall, merging in blurs scarcely brighter than the sky... (p.206).

Several equally poignant moments in *Malone Dies* involve the narrator's effort to imagine the 'scattered lights' of his seaside environs

as part of a larger human network, such as when, in a similar moment of frustrated reflection, he recalls standing 'in tears before the islands and peninsulas where night lit the little brief yellow lights of man' (p.226). Coliemore, Foxrock, Dun Laoghaire, and environs, internally partitioned and set amidst the ideologically contested terrain of decolonization – the inability to posit a *beginning* here, to imagine it as a formerly achieved habitation, haunts the narrator every bit as much as his more famous inability 'to make an end'.

Perhaps Beckett is not so much 'stripping away' his Irish settings as much as he is rendering their already existing obscurity from within. Or, more specifically, he is conflating the notion of humanity's common ground with the genuine vertigo of an attempt to perceive late colonial space – an effort to orient oneself in a country whose 'most typical experience may be that of occupying multiple locations, literally and figuratively'.[37] Particularly compelling in this regard is the fact that some of the most disoriented, yet physically interactive, moments in the trilogy involve experiences of policing and surveillance. In all three novels, the 'unavoidable police' (p.33) or 'innumerable authorities' (p.132) are an inscrutable, hovering presence that is integral to the narrator's disrupted sense of place and uncertain sense of self. As Molloy says, concerning his arrest by a constable:

> I felt the faces turning to look after us ... faces of men, of women, and of children.... Listen, I said. Get on, he said. I wasn't allowed to listen to [their] music. It might have drawn a crowd.... Was there one among them to put himself in my place, to feel how removed I was then from him I seemed to be, and in that remove what strain, as of hawsers about to snap? ... I had perhaps gone too far in saying that my mother lived near the shambles, it could equally well have been the cattle-market, near which she lived. Never mind, said the sergeant, it's the same district (pp.20-22).

Again, the philosophical problem of the 'strained' slippage between subjectivity and objectivity ('how removed I was then from him I seemed to be') is not so much examined in detachment from, as it is enmeshed in disconcerting ambiguity with, the problem of place – here, the problem of orienting kin and community relative to the boundaries of a 'district'.

If one were to insist on a fixed Irish historical reading, these scenes could be interpreted as a reference to the climate of surveillance and suspicion during and after the Civil War between 'diehard' republicans and supporters of the newly declared Free State (from 1922 to 1923). But more important than our ability to fix the location is the fact that Molloy's arrest, his would-be moment of interpellation, results neither

in the identification and placement of the subject nor in the negation of some former identification. That is to say, it confirms that the ambiguities of place and self are inseparable – a condition that stems not from the loss of a known ground, but from the inability to comprehend such a context *as* given: 'it could equally well have been the cattle-market, near which she lived. Never mind, said the sergeant, it's the same district' (pp.20-22).[38] The narrator and characters are as distant from the abstract idea of 'Ireland', of 'the nation', from *within* their region as they would be by travelling outside of it. When Molloy returns to the woman against whom he had committed the crime (accidentally killing her aged and incontinent dog with his bike), she explains that he had actually spared her the expense of putting the dog to sleep,

> an expense which I am ill able to afford, having no other means of support than the pension of my dear departed, fallen in defense of a country that called itself his and from which in his lifetime he never derived the smallest benefit, but only insults and vexations (p.33).

The betrayed promise of pensions and government aid to those who served in or aided the cause of Irish independence, from 1916 to 1921, as well as the general failure of nationalistic idealism to address widespread economic disenfranchisement, is a frequent element of plot and theme in Irish literature of the twenties and thirties, most notably in the plays of Sean O'Casey. It is also one of many examples in Irish history of a basic truth observed in both postcolonial and transnational studies: that nationalism, as a derivative discourse of imperialism, often conspires with its parent ideology to intervene disruptively not only in the formation of individual identities, but also in the potential affiliations, kinships, and communities that one might help to create at the local level. Operating together, the two systems can make one's home into unsettled ground – ground that, whether inhabited or departed (and it is often both), whether loved or despised (and it is often both), remains conceptually and emotionally distant, fissured, protean.

It is imprecise to say that the Beckett landscape is abstract; more accurately, it is rendered with a unique mixture of concreteness and ambiguity, familiarity and disorientation, such that it retains both the ditches and mud of a visceral ground and the obscure aspect of unfamiliar territory:

> And I even crawled on my back, plunging my crutches blindly behind me into the thickets, and with the black boughs for sky to

> my closing eyes.... I fancied I saw, faintly outlined against the horizon, the towers and steeples of a town, which of course I could not assume was mine, on such slight evidence.... (p.91).

What Beckett's narratives epitomize in such instances, what their effort to commune with 'dark forms crowding in a dark place' (p.23) might suggest for our age, is not the bare essence of life with all national and societal contexts stripped away, but the reality of living on an undeniably material, politically over-territorialized ground and not being able to *find* a viable abstraction with which to comprehend it – a condition that is neither limited to a specific place nor historically disengaged. The narrators of the trilogy gain space for critical reflexivity not by separation from a familiar national episteme, but in the midst of traversing a region, 'a chaos of gnarled roots, boulders, and baked mud' (p.204), that they cannot connect with a national abstract. Thus, their challenge to verifiable subjectivity arises at the same time as a vacillation between detachment and attachment to place, a departure that does not occur suddenly or completely, but that is at every moment continuing *to happen*.

The point, then, is not to claim these as 'Irish' texts, at least not in any geographically and nationally confined sense. The fixed nation-state is, after all, the form of abstracting and orienting human experience that is most conspicuously absent from these narratives. 'Town', 'district', and 'region', as well as 'earth' and 'universe', are, by comparison, in ample supply, as is the adjective 'Irish'. The point is to show that what may be their unique feature – ontological inquiry that remains consubstantial with an effort to comprehend material space ('Where now? Who now? When now?', begins the narrator of *The Unnamable* [p.291]) – suggests something provocatively similar to some of the basic propositions in contemporary approaches to cosmopolitanism: that inquiries into our human 'condition' are no more primary or fundamental than inquiries about our identity and belonging relative to place; that these two inquiries are similarly contingent and in perpetual dialogue; and that this dialogue is mobile.

Many contributors to contemporary discussions of cosmopolitanism emphasize that transnational thinking and feeling does not begin 'supranationally', by rejecting something as abstract as 'one's country', but sub-nationally, often through the challenge of developing one's sense of self, community, and broader world during a time when, and in a place where, all three of these concepts are subsumed by the conflicting ideologies left in the wake of imperialism. Hence for Paul Rabinow, recognizing our global 'interdependencies' is not contingent on escaping the narrow boundaries of home, but on understanding 'the inescapabilities and particularities of places, characters, historical

trajectories, and fates'.[39] For Pheng Cheah, it is contingent upon our understanding that for postcolonial nations yet to achieve a territorial, sovereign and equitable statehood, 'the shifting field within which the nation-state finds itself both dislocated and rearticulated ... is a nontranscendable moving ground extending across the globe'.[40] Although it is unarguable that Beckett's novels convey experiences of unknowing that are uncannily relevant to people in multiple locations, a genuinely global recognition of what those ideas are as well as *why* they may apply so widely hinges on our awareness that they arise not in the wake of a destroyed or discarded society, but amidst the interruptions and disjuncture of a society still in process. That they arrive not as essences rescued from the fragments of what Ezra Pound called 'a botched civilization',[41] nor as archetypes of a synchronic world history that, for T.S. Eliot in 'Little Gidding', reverberates 'Now and in England',[42] but as an understanding reached en route to a civilization or shared habitation which is *yet* to be, and may never be.

In the closing moments of *Malone Dies*, the narrator makes a final attempt to stabilize the narrative versions of himself that he has created, and to 'speak only of [himself]' in the present. But the effort to close his story, to achieve detachment and conclusion, is foiled by the confused aspect of the coastal landscape as he tries to envision it from a distance:

> Lemuel watches the mountains rising behind the steeples beyond the harbor, no they are no more
>
> No, they are no more than hills, they raise themselves gently, faintly blue, out of the confused plain. It was there somewhere he was born, ... Their slopes are covered with ling and furze [and] the hammers of the stone-cutters ring all day like bells.
>
> The island. A last effort. The islet. The shore facing the open sea is jagged with creeks. One could live there, perhaps happy, if life were a possible thing (p.286).

Here, the attempt to comprehend the external environment or to liberate the mind from the epistemological demands of orientation – a dominant of Beckett's early work that culminates not just in *Watt*, we might recall, but in Watt's heroic failure to ascertain the essence or logic of a servant's life in a protestant enclave of Dublin – is not only inextricable from, but also no different *than*, the individual's inability to claim himself as a coherent subject. In Molloy's claim that he cannot speak of the characteristics of the region he cannot confirm having left, as well as in the *Malone Dies* narrator's effort to locate his characters on the 'confused plain', internal and external space are not just similarly

indeterminate but mutually analogical. The move into the uncharted country of the contingent philosophical subject, that is to say, occurs not at the *expense* of a solid world that has dissolved and dwindled, but in tandem with an effort to comprehend one's immediate environment that is *still* taking place.

To understand this deferral of attachment to a broader community in the context of one's homeland is to be prepared to see and understand it elsewhere, and to be more likely to see the world itself as engaged with particular historical and political processes that are difficult to abstract, banish to a pre-modern past, or confine geographically. In an 'Egypt without bounds', 'regions do not suddenly end, ... but gradually merge into one another', as Molloy muses (p.65). In the governing metaphor of cosmopolitics, it is to be a grounded traveler, to be 'connected to the earth – but not to "a" place on it [whose essence we can presume to be as] simple and self- evident as the surroundings we see when we open our eyes'.[43] To be, as the narrator of the *Unnamable* has it, a 'great traveler', 'unpredictable in direction', 'crawling on my belly or rolling on the ground' (p.327).

This vision of travellers who, due to their own unresolved attachment to home, resist both the nationalistic and imperialistic impulse to cartographically abstract other geo-social collectives reminds me of a passage from *The Unnamable* that is often cited, though typically not in its full context. The passage comes at the beginning of one of the many soon-to-be-abandoned stories that the narrator feels compelled to tell. It is uttered in comical frustration, as if 'to keep them quiet' who would demand, even this late in the game, a good old fashioned Irish tale:

> To tell the truth – no, first the story. The island, I'm on the island, I've never left the island, God help me. I was under the impression I spent my life in spirals round the earth. Wrong, it's on the island I wind my endless ways. The island, that's all the earth I know (p.326-27).

What I find fascinating about this passage is not its offer of another satirical jab at cultural nationalism (although it is certainly funny in that regard), nor its extra hint that the narrator resides in the coastal Dublin hills, but its suggestion that 'the Island', this cognitively frustrating place that the Beckett characters can neither successfully interpret nor successfully confirm that they have left, is 'all the earth [they] know'. Like many others in the trilogy, that statement conflates the un-reconciled homeland with the world at large. It speaks to a separation which, although it may have physically happened, cannot be confirmed conceptually or fixed in time because that which would

become the 'known' terrain, the departed place that would become visible to the smug émigré in either nostalgic or spiteful retrospect, is a terrain perpetually and powerfully resistant to essential identification, irreconcilable with a fixed temporal or spatial matrix.

It is from this mutable origin, this inability to point to a prior and stable habitation 'among my compatriots, contemporaries, coreligionists and companions in distress' (p.326) that the Beckett terrain emerges. Neither Irish nor universal, it is irreducibly situated between these two abstractions. Rather than opposing an ephemeral, airy universe to the tangible ground of nationally circumscribed life, it proposes that the universe is the continuation of an obscure ground, the mobilization of an inscrutable rootedness. As the voice of the *The Unnamable* inquires:

> But what's all this about ... staying where you are, dying, living, being born, unable to go forward or back, not knowing where you came from, or where you are, or where you're going, or that it's possible to be elsewhere, to be otherwise, ... you can't, you're there, you don't know who, you don't know where, the thing stays where it is, nothing changes, within it, outside it, apparently, apparently (p.370).

Thus although these narratives may well hint uncannily at a fundamental human problem, there is a substantial chance that they do so because they understand deeply a condition that has been far more prevalently experienced on our inexorable earth than Eurocentric western modernity. That condition, as Borges also knew, is the vexed compulsion to construct narratives (whether subjective or objective, whether about staying or going) in relation to ideologically contested, colonized, or serially interrupted territory – 'to produce', as the narrator of *The Unnamable* puts it, 'ostensibly independent testimony in support of [one's] historical existence' (p.319) in 'that unfamiliar native land of mine' (p.314).

NOTES

1. Jorge Louis Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings* (New York: New Directions, 1964), pp.42-3.
2. Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels by Samuel Beckett: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*, trans. by Patrick Bowles (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), p.214, p.302. Further references to this text cited parenthetically.
3. S.E. Gontarski, *The Intent of 'Undoing' in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp.3-4.
4. In the most general sense, cosmopolitics is an umbrella term for transnational ethics, or modes of global governance, that are based in democratic values. Following the

work of Pheng Cheah, Bruce Robbins, Timothy Brennan and others, in my use of the term I also mean an approach to global democratic thought and practice that does not marginalize emergent postcolonial nations and states, diasporas, or minority-transnational individuals and communities.

5. Rubin Rabinovitz, *Innovation in Samuel Beckett's Fiction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), p.106.
6. In their co-authored study *Frescoes of the Skull: The Later Prose and Drama of Samuel Beckett* (London: Calder, 1979), Knowlson and Pilling focus on Beckett as a 'cerebral artist [who] has been engaged in an unprecedented archaeological investigation [of the mind]' (p.xiii). In *Trapped in Thought: A Study of the Beckettian Mentality* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), Eric P. Levy extends this approach by proposing that the entire Beckett oeuvre is an ongoing representation of the same paradoxical 'mentality [or] attitude of cognitive apprehension', and that Beckett uses literary form to manifest this cerebral existence, to 'evacuate experience of any content but conviction in the excruciating futility of enduring it' (p.12).
7. Paul Davies, 'Three Novels and Four "Nouvelles": giving up the ghost be born at last', in *The Cambridge Companion to Beckett*, ed. by John Pilling (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.47.
8. J.D. O'Hara, 'Introduction', in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Molloy, Malone Dies, and The Unnamable*, ed. by J.D. O'Hara (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p.15.
9. Deirdre Bair, *Samuel Beckett* (London: Pan Books, 1980), p.299.
10. As Cyrania E. Johnson-Roullier puts it, in *Reading on the Edge: Exiles, Modernities, and Cultural Transformation in Proust, Joyce and Baldwin* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), the 'aesthetic perfection which has traditionally been that of Euro-American international modernism' creates its own, deterritorialized 'cultural space' (p.28). Hugh Kenner often exemplifies this point when he speaks of 'International Modernism'. For example, in *The Pound Era* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1971), he states, regarding the innovations of Joyce, Pound, and Eliot, that 'the province of these works, as never before in history, is the entire human race speaking, in time as well as in space' (p.95).
11. Ruby Cohn, 'Joyce and Beckett, Irish Cosmopolitans', *James Joyce Quarterly* 8 (1971), 388-90. The curricular guide to the Channel 4 and RTÉ television series, 'Beckett on Film', reminds us of how this dominant twentieth century equation (immaterial setting = universal meaning) persists as a pedagogical imperative. The guide advises the Beckett newcomer that '[t]he focus is on the nature of human existence, regardless of where the characters are'. See '*Waiting for Godot*: Setting'. Channel Four Learning. http://learning.channel4.com/support/programmenotes. Accessed 5/27/09.
12. C.J.Ackerley and S.E. Gontarski, 'Introduction', in *The Grove Companion to Samuel Beckett: A Reader's Guide to His Works, Life, and Thought* (New York: Grove, 2004), p.xv. I am grateful to Sean Kennedy for bringing these passages to my attention. Professor Kennedy is editor of the forthcoming volume *Beckett and Ireland* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).
13. Ackerley and Gontarski, p.xv.
14. Walter Mignolo, 'Human Understanding and (Latin) American Interests – The Politics and Sensibilities of Geohistorical Locations', in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Henry Schwartz and Sangeeta Ray (Malden: Blackwell, 2000), p.189.
15. Astradur Eysteinsson, *The Concept of Modernism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp.52-53.
16. Ricardo J. Quinones, *Mapping Literary Modernism: Time and Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p.4.

17. Definitive and influential examples of this stance appear often in Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson's *The Modern Tradition*: 'Modernism strongly implies some sort of historical discontinuity, either a liberation from inherited patterns or, at another extreme, deprivation and disinheritance.... Committed to everything in human experience that militates against custom ... [modern literature] has made the most of its break with the past, its inborn challenge to established culture'. Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson, Jr, eds., *The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p.vi.
18. Eric P. Levy, *Beckett and the Voice of Species: A Study of the Prose Fiction* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1980), p.10.
19. Theodor Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, 2 vols, trans. by Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p.230.
20. Elsewhere, Adorno argues that Beckett and Kafka 'arouse [in the reader] the fear which existentialism merely talks about', namely, the awareness that all meta-narratives or explanatory paradigms for human experience are arbitrary. 'Commitment', trans. Francis McDonagh, in *Aesthetics and Politics*, Adorno, et. al. (London: Verso, 2007), p.191.
21. Pheng Cheah, 'Given Culture: Rethinking Cosmopolitical Freedom in Transnationalism', in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. by Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p.324.
22. Bruce Robbins, 'Introduction I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism', in Cheah and Robbins, p.2.
23. Commentators such as David Chandler and Timothy Brennan argue that cosmopolitanism has not changed much, at least with regard to its underestimation of the sovereign nation-state as the only proven guarantor of rights (Chandler, 'International Justice', in *Debating Cosmopolitics*, ed. by Daniele Archibugi (London:Verso, 2003), pp.34-35; Brennan, 'Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism,' in Archibugi, pp.40-50). For Brennan, it now merely means 'the global entrance into a common hybrid self-consciousness by formerly subjugated peoples, without in the least disturbing the self-portraiture of the West' (p.45). Meanwhile, commentators such as Kwame Anthony Appiah propose that the term 'cosmopolitanism ... can be rescued' to promote ethical cooperation in the contemporary global arena, given its core principle 'that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs which lend them significance' (Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: Norton, 2007), pp.xiv-xv). Whereas Brennan sees the concept as neglectful of specific non-western nation-states in process, for Appiah the new cosmopolitanism recreates, on a global scale, an ideal national model of a dialogue respecting difference: a project which does not 'disdain ... the partialities of kinfolk and community', for 'it begins with the simple idea that in the human community, as in national communities, we need to develop habits of coexistence: ... of living together, association' (p.xix). Pheng Cheah clarifies that cosmopolitanism at its proper historical epitome (Immanuel Kant's promotion of the concept in 1795) had as its antonym 'not nationalism but statism' and that, then as now, one's obligations to humanity at large and one's 'affective and concrete' link to national processes, especially those 'prior to [their] annexation of the territorial state', are not opposites (Cheah, 'Introduction Part II', in Cheah and Robbins, pp.22-25.). Indeed, one constant in these discussions is the need to understand how our engagements with particular national or cultural life, and our responsibilities to common or global humanity, can be collaborative without either form of belonging becoming reductive or insular.

24. In a recent study of cosmopolitanism in postcolonial and transnational contexts, Sheldon Pollock and his co-editors qualify that 'emergent discourses of cosmopolitanism [reflect] our need to ground our sense of mutuality in conditions of mutability, and to learn to live tenaciously in terrains of historic and cultural transition'. A 'cosmopolitanism grounded in the tenebrous moment of transition', they propose, 'is distinct from [earlier] more triumphalist notions of cosmopolitical existence [such as] modernity [and its] universalist claims to world citizenship'. Sheldon Pollock, et al., 'Cosmopolitanisms', in *Cosmopolitanism*, ed by Carol A. Breckenridge et. al., (Durham: Duke UP, 2002), pp.4-5.
25. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, Vol. 1: 1929-1940, ed by Martha Dow Fehsenfeld and Lois More Overbeck, (New York: Cambridge, 2009), p.136.
26. *Letters*, p.93. 'moulin à larmes' means 'a tearmill' and is apparently Beckett's adaptation of the French for 'windmill', 'moulin à vent'. This according to George Craig, the French translator for volume one of the letters, p.95. One of the readers of this essay recommended that I explore this connection in Beckett's letters, and I am very grateful that he or she did so.
27. James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, pp.318-19. Other biographies concur that Beckett's minimalist style stemmed from a revelation that he had during a return visit to Ireland after he had been living as a refugee from occupied Paris in World War II. While visiting his ailing mother near Foxrock, he realized that the way to his mature style lay not through *embellishing* the crisis of knowing, as he had done in *Watt* (which was set in the south Dublin suburbs), but 'in impoverishment, in lack of knowledge, and in taking away, in subtracting rather than adding' (quoted in Knowlson, *Damned*, pp.318-19). Biographers disagree on the exact location between central Dublin and Dalkey where this revelation occurred, but the ironic, self-effacing version of it that appears in *Krapp's Last Tape* is, as Beckett confirmed to Knowlson, set upon the pier at Dun Laoghaire harbour, formerly Kingstown.
28. For evidence of these particulars in the trilogy, see Eoin O'Brien's *The Beckett Country: Samuel Beckett's Ireland* (Dublin: The Black Cat Press, 1986), and, especially for its accompanying critical analysis of 'the hermeneutic treatment of place' in Beckett's novels, John Harrington's *The Irish Beckett* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1991), pp.156-170.
29. David Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Postcolonial Moment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), p.11.
30. Joe Cleary, 'Misplaced Ideas? Locating and Dislocating Ireland in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies', in *Marxism, Modernity, and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.121-23.
31. Anthony Cronin, *Samuel Beckett: The Last Modernist* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1999), p.36.
32. Cronin notes this on pp.36-7. The scenario is corroborated in Bair's biography, p.32.
33. Cronin, p.36.
34. Vivian Mercier, in *Beckett/Beckett* (New York: Oxford, 1977), notes that the vast disparities of class and numerous examples of homelessness Beckett regularly witnessed when travelling, even on foot, from Foxrock to surrounding points left a lasting impression on the author that persists in his penchant not only for depicting tramps and vagabonds, but also for extrapolating their condition philosophically.
35. As John Harrington has pointed out, although Beckett's later prose 'reduc[es] identifiable references to Ireland', it exaggerates a 'hermeneutic treatment of place' and unresolved 'dialectic of home and away' that is evident in his earlier novels *Mercier and Camier* and *Watt*, and important to modern Irish literature in general. See Harrington's *The Irish Beckett* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1991), pp.158-59. For Harrington, the trilogy is actually about the failure of exile and the impossibility of separation, even as the particular national landmarks become less recognizable.

36. Samuel Beckett, *All That Fall*, in *Collected Shorter Plays* (New York: Grove Press, 1984), pp.24-25. The first ellipses in the quotation are mine. The rest are Beckett's.
37. David Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Postcolonial Moment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), p.3. Lloyd adds: 'With peculiar intensity, Irish culture plays out the anomalous states of a population whose most typical experience may be that of occupying multiple locations, literally and figuratively.... There can scarcely be a writer more devoted than Beckett to the thorough and elegant elaboration of [these] insurmountable contradictions of identity' (pp.3-4). Elsewhere, Lloyd also points out that abstraction and differentiation, which are 'effects of capitalist colonialism', are seriously challenged in an 'Ireland ... in which the relationship between concepts and material history is productively vexed, leading to a high degree of nonreductive conceptual differentiation'('Ireland After History', in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Sangeeta Ray and Henry Schwartz (Malden: Blackwell, 2000), p.389).
38. That abstract political allegiances and the authorities who act on their behalf are integral to the socio-geographic alienation of Beckett's subjects is also evident in part two of *Molloy*, wherein Moran – who shares a surname with the zealous cultural nationalist Patrick Moran – tracks Molloy across 'the Molloy country ... called Bally', in service of 'a cause that is not mine ... with hatred in my heart, and scorn, of my master and his designs' (pp.132-33). A similar scenario is implied again in *Malone Dies* (and therefore *The Unnamable*), via the hint that Malone's captivity relates to his memories of 'kill[ing], [by] hitting them on the head or setting fire to ... four [people], all unknowns', including an 'old butler ... in London' (p.236).
39. Paul Rabinow, 'Representations are Social Facts', in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p.258.
40. Cheah, p.324.
41. Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1957), p.64.
42. T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, 1988), p.50.
43. Robbins, p.3.